

Steven Beseau ordained for archdiocese

By PAMELA REEB

Leaven Staff

KANSAS CITY, Kan. — Church bells pealed and choirs sang as Steven Paul Beseau answered the Lord's question, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?" when he dedicated his life to sharing the Gospel in a resplendent and touching ceremony June 10 at the Cathedral of St. Peter here.

More than 400 friends, family and well-wishers

See an additional story about Father Beseau on page 3. packed the cathedral to watch the ordination of

Beseau, the only candidate for priesthood in the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas this year. Archbishop James P. Keleher was the ordaining prelate.

Voices rose to the spires with "Lift High the Cross" during the entrance procession, which consisted of more than 50 priests, including retired Archbishop Ignatius Strecker. Beseau was escorted by his parents, Mike and Mary Sue Beseau of Shawnee.

The archbishop thanked the Beseaus for encouraging Steven's vocation and giving him support during his studies. "The support of family is critical for young men preparing for the priesthood," he said.

"Working toward your vocation is admirable, but the divine call is the guarantor of choices we make," Archbishop Keleher said to Beseau. "What

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Laura Ramberg, sculptor, poses St. John the Evangelist Parish. Inset

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your decision means is you and I will be fellow workers. We have both answered our call and are both destined to preach the entire Gospel of Jesus Christ to all who will listen. You are about to enter a presbyterate that is pious and prayerful. They will be a blessing to you and you will be a blessing to them."

Beseau knelt before the archbishop and promised to "exercise the ministry of the word, preach the Gospel and explain the Catholic faith." During the litany of saints, he prostrated himself in front of the altar. The archbishop and all the priests present laid their hands on Beseau's head, signifying the invocation of the Holy Spirit and recalling the healing hand of Christ.

"Your acts of ministry will keep you close to Jesus," Archbishop Keleher said. "Despite the pace of ministerial duties today in the church, never give up the time and meditation that you need to stay in touch with Christ our Lord. Make

a special effort and look forward to moments of prayer in your life. Remember that if you are faithful to him, he will be faithful to you."

The archbishop said a prayer of ordination and Beseau was vested with the stole and chasuble by Father Thomas Culhane. Archbishop Keleher then anointed Beseau's hands with chrism. A chalice and paten were presented to Beseau with a reminder from the archbishop that he was following the steps of Jesus.

"Accept from the holy people of God the gifts to be offered to Him. Know what you are doing and imitate the mystery you celebrate; model your life on the mystery of the Lord's cross."

After the presentation of gifts, the archbishop and all the priests welcomed Beseau into the priesthood with a sign of peace.

Two Benedictine Sisters die at motherhouse

ATCHISON — Sister Marcella Siela, 93, lifetime educator in northeast Kansas, died June 14 at Mount St. Scholastica, where she lived.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated June 17 in St. Scholastica Chapel.

Vivian Siela was born in Perkins, Okla., Sept. 22, 1901. She joined the Benedictine Sisters in 1924.

ATCHISON — Sister Iniga Reichert, 90, died June 11, at Mount St. Scholastica, where she lived.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated June 14 in St. Scholastica Chapel.

Maria Reichert was born Aug. 26, 1904, in Leutershausen, Bavaria, West Germany. She came to the United States in 1924.

Law student succumbs to the power of suggestion

By JOE BOLLIG
Leaven Staff

KANSAS CITY, Kan. — One weird day can change your life. Just ask Steve Beseau.

Beseau's weird day took place in September 1989, while he was a student at Washburn Law School, Topeka. He was talking with a friend about nothing in particular that morning when she said, "Steve, have you ever considered being a priest?"

No, but thank you very much, he said, and went on with his business for the day. Later, he was having lunch with a young lady, who he hoped to ask out for a date. Just as he was ready to ask her out, she said, "Steve, have you ever thought about becoming a priest?"

Weird. Two people in one day. Something's going on, he thought. Hmmm.

Later that afternoon, he was talking with another friend about church is-

sues, and his friend said:

"Well, Steve, have you ever thought about being a priest?"

Whoa! Too weird. Three people in one day! For the first time since he arrived at law school, Beseau left before the library closed. He went to his apartment, fixed a sandwich, sat down in front of the TV, and began to eat.

As the TV warmed up, a movie came on. It was "The Shoes of the Fisherman," starring Anthony Quinn.

Beseau fell back, flat on the floor, and looked up.

"God, I don't know why you're asking me this," he said. "I know the answer is no, but I'll at least consider being a priest."

Five and one-half years later, on June 10, Beseau was ordained a priest at St. Peter Cathedral here by Archbishop James P. Keleher. Weird can be wonderful.

There's more to Father Steve Beseau's vocation story than "ordained by

popular demand." It's a story of a call that was briefly misplaced, but later picked up with enthusiasm.

Father Beseau, 29, was born and raised in Shawnee. His father works for the U.S. Post Office and his mother is a homemaker and part-time house cleaner. He, his parents, and his three brothers and one sister are members of St. Joseph Parish, Shawnee.

Religious vocations are not unusual in his family. One relative was a mother superior of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, and another was a missionary. It was normal to see Sisters show up for a birthday party or other family functions. The fact that vocations are accepted in the family was probably a factor in his own vocation.

"Even the relatives who are not (priests or sisters) have a deep faith," he said. "I didn't really come to appreciate it until I was in the seminary, but they love the church, absolutely love it. And a lot of them have given their lives, so much to the church."

Mass every Sunday was a must — there was no question of skipping. During May and October they'd have family rosaries.

"We were a normal family, with all the fights and disagreements," he said. "The time I felt closest to my family was when we would pray the rosary. . . .

We'd be sitting there, next to my brother, and we'd be fighting. It was just a pain to get all four kids, at that time, praying. But after the first decade we'd calm down. I'll always remember how we sat around the room. That's when I felt closest to my family."

Even as young as seven years old, the vocation seed was already growing in Beseau; he used to "play Mass," being the main celebrant for the other kids. And when a priest came to his third-grade class for a vocation talk, and asked who would like to be a priest, Father Beseau enthusiastically raised his hand. In the seventh grade the topic of vocation was still on his mind, and he thought he might have a vocation as a brother after visiting a Capuchin Franciscan at Thomas More Prep, Hays.

Father Beseau went to St. Joseph Grade School, and then graduated from Aquinas High School. He was active in his youth group and loved going on retreats.

Thanks to good grades, and working as a caddie at Millburn Country Club starting in the eighth grade, Father Beseau won an Evans Scholarship to the University of Kansas, Lawrence. Evans Scholars were members of a fraternity, now closed. He was very involved in the fraternity, and liked it very much. But, like many other college students, he began to drift away from faith.

"Church became less important, began to have doubts," he said. "If any one asked, I'd say I was Catholic. My big thing was I wanted proof that Jesus Christ existed, a piece of paper, something. I really struggled with this. How do we know this guy 2,000 years ago existed, and if he did exist, how do we know he's the Son of God?"

And then he'd go to church, and see the hypocrisy of all the people claiming to be holy.

"I managed to see the hypocrisy of everyone but myself," said Father Beseau.

The important turning point came when he read some items about Fatima and Medjugorje. Reading, he realized he did believe, and then he understood what is meant by "to Jesus through Mary."

During his senior year at K.U., he became very involved in activities at the St. Lawrence Catholic Campus Center. Father Beseau's "conversion" moved from the head to the heart and the soul.

Still, he thought his future lay in politics or law. After graduating in 1988, he worked at a law firm in Kansas City and then entered Washburn Law School.

Later that evening of his "weird day," Father Beseau went back to the St. Lawrence Center to talk to a good friend and mentor, Sister Pat Lynch OSU. Sister Pat was outreach director at the St. Lawrence Center, but now mother superior of the Paola-based Iuline Sisters. She was the first person to encourage him to explore this call.

Seminary wasn't easy — there were struggles and tensions — but Father Beseau knew he had to do it. *Could he imagine himself doing anything else but being a priest?*

"Yes, and maybe that's why I had no doubts, because I always felt the freedom to leave," he said. "It was never a question that I couldn't do anything else, that I had to be a priest. There were a number of things I could have done, I always felt that freedom up to ordination day. I don't have to do this, but I want to do this, and God wants me to do this, and other people want me to do this."

And, instrumental in Father Beseau answering the call to the priesthood, were the excellent priests serving in the archdiocese and at the seminaries he attended. It encouraged him to meet priests who loved their God, their parishioners, and their priesthood.

They helped him love his priesthood, too.

Father Beseau's first assignment will be as associate pastor at St. Ann Parish, Prairie Village.



Joe Bollig

Father Steve Beseau takes some time to practice his golf swing.

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